

TORCH OF REASON.



"TRUTH BEARS THE TORCH IN THE SEARCH FOR TRUTH."—*Lucretius*.

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Time To Me.

TIME to me this truth has taught,
'Tis a truth that's worth revealing:
More offend from want of thought
Than from want of feeling.

If advice we would convey,
There's a time we should convey it;
If we've but a word to say,
There is time in which to say it.

Oft unknowingly the tongue
Touches on a chord so aching
That a word or accent wrong
Pains the heart almost to breaking.

Many a tear of wounded pride,
Many a fault of human blindness,
Hath been soothed or turned aside
By a quiet voice of kindness.

Time to me this truth hath taught,
'Tis a truth that's worth revealing:
More offend from want of thought
Than from want of feeling.

—[Anon.]

The Passing of the Doctrine of Natural Rights.

SHALL THE REPUBLIC GO?

BY L. A. SMITH.

LAST week we called attention to the ground taken by a leading American journal, *The Outlook*, edited by Lyman Abbott, in declaring the straight National Reform doctrine, that the proper basis of civil government is not the consent of the governed, but the law of God. And now comes another leading American journal, *The Independent*, and declares that the doctrine of natural rights must be set aside as an out-grown tradition; that, in fact, it is "likely to gasp out its last breath in the pending campaign." and the only rule that can be followed in government is that of "the greatest good to the greatest number."

Such avowals from leading American journals are startling, and would be so to Americans everywhere but for the teaching assiduously put forth by influential Americans the past two years, leading away from the ideals of republican government.

"One of the theories which has suffered most in these critical days," says *The Independent*, "is that of 'natural rights.' It is true that it has been reiterated in very recent times by a man conspicuously learned and able, the philosopher Spencer. And yet" affirms *The Independent*, "though buttressed by so eminent a name, it has failed to make any distinct impress on the age, and the revolt against it grows apace." *The Independent* seems not to recollect that this doctrine of natural rights

has all through the century been standing in the Declaration of Independence, than which there has been no higher political authority for Americans, and is strangely oblivious to the fact that the Declaration of Independence has during this whole century most profoundly affected the political ideas and ambitions of men throughout the civilized world.

NO SUCH THING AS A REAL RIGHT.

"The fundamental principle in social conduct, according to Spencer," continues *The Independent*, "is this: 'every man has the right to do that which he wills, provided he infringes not the equal freedom of any other man.' So stated," says *The Independent*, "it meets with well nigh universal approval. But," it says, "the moment it is sought to determine what constitutes infringement, there arises a world of interpretations so diverse and numerous that if order is to be maintained on the planet, organized society, the state, must step in and compromise. As for particular 'rights,' to be fundamental, to be real rights, they must be of universal applicability." Then *The Independent* inquires, "can anyone point to a postulate of a 'right,' which for any considerable time, by any considerable number of men, has been held to be absolute, unqualified by time, place or circumstance?" The conclusion is that there is no such thing as a "real right."

"What one man declares to be a 'right,'" it says, "another declares a wrong; that which one generation holds to be natural and inalienable, the next generation considers unnatural and promptly alienates." "No society finds it possible to acknowledge an 'alienable right' to life. * * * In every part of the world society finds it necessary to determine the conditions under which its members shall live, not on the basis of universal moral law, but on that of social justice, which is but another name for social expediency. 'Rights' thus resolve themselves into postulates born of particular times, places, and conditions."

Such is *The Independent's* conclusion, which amounts to saying that there is no such thing as a natural right; that is, a right which a person has by virtue of his creation.

The doctrine of government by consent of the governed, *The Independent* finds, very naturally, to be equally far from being a "self-

evident truth." "Examined judicially," it declares, "this principle is seen to be impossible, since it violates the fundamental assumption of every state—the assumption of power to determine what is best for the continuance of its own life. Examined historically, it is seen that no people has ever acknowledged it in practice." The *Independent* does not believe "that the fathers who promulgated it" could have "entirely meant it." If they had been of "an exacter turn of mind," they would have specified many exceptions to the rule, as in the case of females, minors, slaves, inhabitants of the territories not yet admitted into the union of states, etc.

A NEW BASIS OF GOVERNMENT.

From all this, *The Independent* arrives at the conclusion before stated, which it puts as follows: "This absolute generalization regarding consent, disregarded by its formulators, and practically disavowed by every state that has ever existed, is likely to gasp out its last breath in the pending campaign. The progressive democratic philosophy of today is building the coming state in the light of considerations of social ends. It postulates nothing, in analyzes and decomposes old principles and theories, it concerns itself not with 'rights,' but with duties, with social adaptations, with an ideal of 'the greatest good to the greatest number,' as that greatest good may be determined by experiences of fact."

This sweeps aside at once the whole system of American republican government set up a century ago upon the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, and which has continued unquestioned by Americans down to the time of the capture of Manila. No more natural rights, no more consent of the governed, neither in the Philippines, nor in America, but only the principle of "the greatest good to the greatest number," to be operated according to the dictates of expediency,—such is the basis to which American free government is being rapidly shifted before our eyes.

How will this affect the American people? This is simply to ask how it will affect an individual to deny that he has any natural rights, that his consent is necessary to his government, and to hold every interest that he may have subject to what men may consider "the greatest good to the greatest num-

ber." Let us consider a case for illustration.

AN ILLUSTRATION.

Here is an individual who observes the seventh day as the sabbath, according to the specifications of the fourth commandment. A committee of his neighbors, headed by a clergyman, visits him and informs him that he must keep Sunday.

"But," he says, "my conscience tells me that the seventh day is the Sabbath, and I cannot keep two days in the week. I cannot sanctify the seventh day, without regarding the other days of the week as working days."

"The Christian Sabbath is not the seventh day of the week but the first day," is the reply; "and you must observe it. This is a Christian nation and you must observe the rest day fixed upon by the majority of the people. That is the law of the land."

"But it is my right," says the seventh-day Christian, "to be guided by my own conscience in the matter of Sabbath observance. The constitution of the state declares that 'every man has a natural and inalienable right to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of his own conscience.'"

These words provoke a mocking laugh. "Ho, ho, here is a man who clings to that old theory of natural rights! Why, my friend, that theory is all out of date. The progressive democratic philosophy of today has exploded those old notions of our fathers about natural rights and the consent of the governed.

They were well enough in theory but they weren't capable of application to existing conditions in this government. If men were allowed to claim that they have natural, inalienable rights which the government must respect, some men would claim one thing and some another, and society and the government would be thrown into hopeless confusion. We have got to be guided now by what is expedient."

"And," adds the clergyman, "the constitution of the state is wrong in allowing that men may do as they please in matters of religion. That was the work of political atheists and it must be changed. Civil government, it is now recognized, rests not upon what men may will, but upon the law of God."

"But," persists the observer of the seventh day, "I am bound by the law of God, which says that